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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
5 September 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

US and ARVN military successes in South Vietnam during the past two days have been offset somewhat by heavy losses among government troops sustained in Viet Cong attacks on government outposts in the delta area. In North Vietnam, a new instance of an apparent SAM attack on US aircraft occurred on 5 September.

On the Communist political front, Hanoi continues to reiterate its intention to persist in fighting the war; Peking, however, seems somewhat unsure of the DRV's determination and has issued a spate of propaganda apparently aimed at encouraging the North Vietnam fighting spirit.

I. Military Situation in South Vietnam: Preliminary reports indicate that US marines killed 25 Viet Cong today in an operation 10 miles north of Qui Nhon. US casualties were apparently light (Para. 1). Elements of the US 101st Airborne Brigade skirmished today with a small enemy unit near An Khe in Binh Dinh Province. Ten guerrillas were captured (Para. 2). Viet Cong mortar fire inflicted heavy losses on government troops defending an outpost on the outskirts of Tay Ninh city (Para. 3). A large ARVN operation in Vinh Binh Province ended yesterday with 53 Viet Cong killed and 24 captured. Friendly losses were 16 killed and 55 wounded. Meanwhile the Viet Cong inflicted heavy losses on two government outposts in the delta (Para. 4).

II. Political Situation in South Vietnam: Nothing of significance to report.

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Mobile SAMs were employed once more on 5 September in the central DRV coastal area.

Prior to this incident, two other USN

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: Nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi propaganda on the occasion of the DRV's 20th anniversary has continued to be characterized by expressions of determination to carry on the war. At the same time, the propaganda is tempered by a strong emphasis on the probable long duration of the conflict and the necessity for Vietnamese north and south to work and fight harder. (Paras. 1-3). Meanwhile, several recent Chinese Communist statements suggest a growing Peking concern over Hanoi's staying power in the war. (Para. 5).

VI. Other Major Aspects: US and South Vietnamese destroyed the nine primary targets in the ROLLING THUNDER package for 27 August - 2 September in the first three days. The rest of the period was devoted to armed reconnaissance missions (Paras. 1-6). [redacted] the number of Soviet economic aid personnel in the DRV climbed sharply in August. (Paras. 7-9).

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Twenty-five Viet Cong guerrillas were killed today by US marines in a coordinated air and sea-borne operation some 10 miles north of Qui Nhon, according to preliminary reports. The operation, involving two companies of the Marines' 7th Regiment, was targeted against an estimated two Viet Cong platoons in the area. US casualties were described as "extremely light."

2. Elements of the US 101st Airborne Brigade skirmished today with a small enemy unit about 12 miles east of An Khe in Binh Dinh Province. Ten guerrillas were captured. US casualties were light.

3. In other action today, Viet Cong mortar fire inflicted heavy losses on government popular force troops defending an outpost on the outskirts of Tay Ninh city. Three guerrillas were reported killed during a small arms attack on a nearby watchtower.

4. A five-battalion ARVN search-and-destroy operation in Vinh Binh Province ended yesterday with 53 Viet Cong killed and 24 captured. Friendly casualties were 16 killed (1 US) and 55 wounded (1 US). Meanwhile the Viet Cong launched two attacks against government outposts located in Kien Giang and Bac Lieu provinces in the delta. Thirteen friendly troops were listed as missing in the Kien Giang attack. Enemy casualties were not known. The attack in Bac Lieu, involving an estimated three Viet Cong companies, was repulsed with friendly losses of 13 killed, 20 wounded, and eight missing. Enemy losses were two killed.

5. According to a delayed report, a Popular Force scout unit ambushed an unknown number of Viet Cong in Kien Giang Province on 2 September, killing 18 enemy and capturing 10 weapons. There were no friendly losses.

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6. MACV's military report for 2 September shows 71 Viet Cong - initiated incidents, eight of which occurred during the 24-hour reporting period. The report for 3 September shows 131 incidents, ten of which occurred during the reporting period. No significant new actions were reported as widespread harassment and sabotage continued to characterize enemy activity in the countryside.

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II. POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Nothing of significance to report.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Mobile SAMs were employed once more on 5 September in the central DRV coastal area, this time unsuccessfully. Two USN A4C Skyhawks flying over water southeast of Thanh Hoa about 15 miles from shore were the targets.

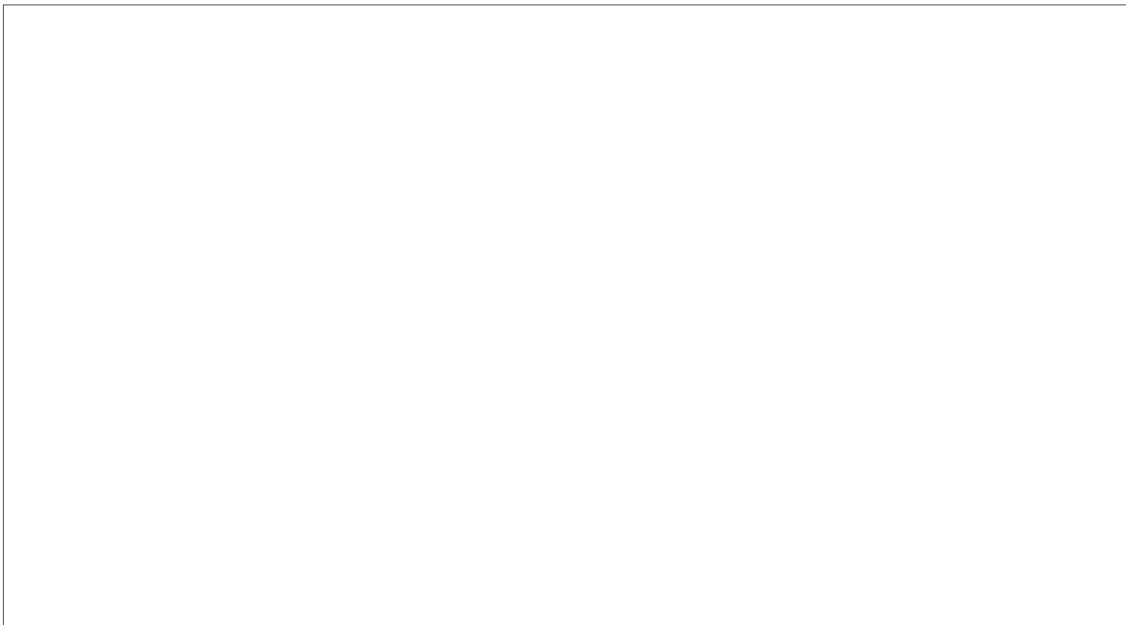
the US aircraft immediately took evasive action by diving from 15,000 feet to 5,000 feet. As the aircraft leveled off, both pilots noted a large brown explosion approximately a quarter of a mile away. This was followed immediately by a large orange explosion in the same vicinity. Pilots estimate that the altitude of the explosions was 14,000 feet.

2. Prior to this missile launch, two other USN A4C Skyhawks were conducting armed reconnaissance over the DRV.

3. A strike against the Bac Kan ammo depot 65 miles north of Hanoi was canceled on 5 September because of the discovery of a new SAM site just south of the target. Photo readout is not yet available but, if confirmed, will bring the total of fixed SAM sites to 19.

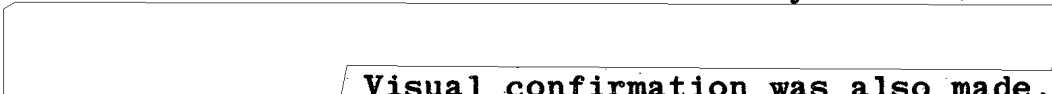
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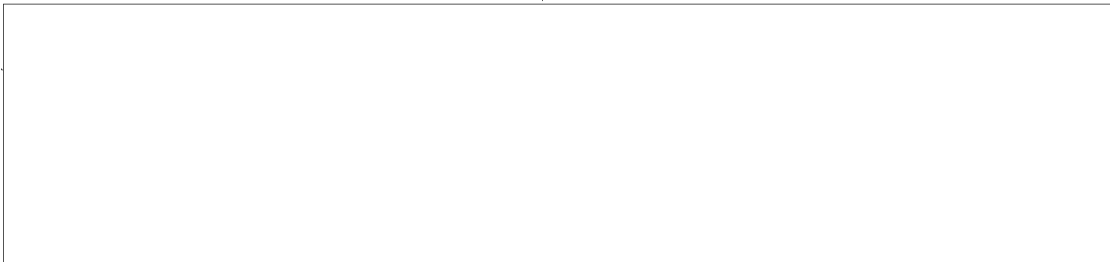
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6. A North Vietnamese maritime infiltration boat has been sighted and identified in South Vietnam waters approximately 20 miles from the coast of Thua Thien Province east of the city of Hué.



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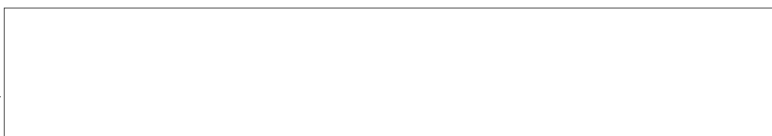
Visual confirmation was also made, and the boat was described as a "large sampan." The North Vietnamese Maritime Infiltration Group--referred to as Group 125--is composed of 24 boats. Since February these boats have been operating in DRV waters in the northern Gulf of Tonkin. This is the first known instance of infiltration by Group 125 since the sinking of the steel-hulled ship off Vung Ro Bay in February 1965.



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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

- 1. Nothing of significance to report.**

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Expressions of confidence in the ability of the Vietnamese to win the war continue to predominate as the basic theme of speeches and propaganda in North Vietnam on the occasion of the Hanoi regime's 20th anniversary. At the same time, the confident tone is tempered by a heavy emphasis on the probable long duration of the conflict and the necessity that the Vietnamese, both north and south, work and fight harder, and be willing to make any sacrifice in order to achieve victory.

2. Taken as a whole, the DRV propaganda on the occasion does not reveal any softening in Hanoi's position on negotiations. The standard four-point proposal of the North Vietnamese is reaffirmed several times as the "correct" basis for a "settlement" of the war. The initiation of talks, as such, on the conflict is not treated except in reference to the Vietnamese experience during the war with France. Franco-Vietnamese discussions, the propaganda indicates, resulted only in the strengthening of the French military position. Decisive military defeat of the French was necessary, according to the propaganda, in order to assure the "success" of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

3. The over-all impression created by the propaganda on the anniversary is that the Vietnamese Communists have been sobered by the recent military developments in South Vietnam, and by the attrition of the air war against the DRV. They do not, however, appear to be convinced as yet that they cannot hold their own against the non-Communist forces in the south and weather the aerial attrition in the north. The propaganda puts special emphasis on assertions that the US is not prepared to conduct a prolonged war in Vietnam, but that the Vietnamese insurgents are prepared to do so and have the necessary resources.

4. The heavy Chinese Communist attention in propaganda to the 20th anniversary of the defeat

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of Japan has drawn a very careful response from the DRV. In contrast to Peking, which ignores the Soviet role in the defeat of the Japanese, Hanoi specifically cites Moscow's intervention as the determining factor in the war. A Nhan Dan editorial, for example, describes the complete collapse of the Japanese "after receiving a deadly blow" from the Soviet Army. The Chinese, says the editorial, were strong enough to seize the initiative against Japan "after the Soviet Union declared war." The DRV's treatment of the occasion is probably in part a reflection of its efforts in recent months to balance off praise of both China and the Soviet Union. However, Hanoi may also be attempting to remind the Chinese of the importance of material support from the socialist camp in any fight against "aggression."

5. The Chinese, for their part, are continuing to issue propaganda blasts against negotiations which are phrased in a manner suggesting that they doubt Hanoi's staying power and are trying to encourage the North Vietnamese. A 3 September Peking broadcast on the US "peace smoke-screen" denounces as "fraudulent" alleged US desires to "discuss the four-point proposal of the DRV Government" as well as Washington's efforts to have a "third party peddle" its peace proposals. The broadcast asserts that "nobody should allow himself to be taken in and give the Johnson administration a chance to realize its vicious scheme." In a 2 September speech in Peking on the occasion of the DRV's 20th anniversary, Premier Chou En-lai cautioned against any negotiations on the conflict while US troops still remained in South Vietnam. The US, Chou said, "could carry on endless talks with you so that it may hang on there indefinitely."

6. By contrast, the USSR's propaganda treatment of the DRV independence anniversary has contained only routine denunciations of the US peace proposals on Vietnam. Soviet propaganda on the occasion repeats promises to supply Hanoi with aid in "all fields" in order to strengthen the DRV's defense potential. Both the lead article in a 3 September

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Pravda editorial and a congratulatory message to Hanoi from Soviet leaders make it clear that Moscow considers its political and military support for the DRV an effective weapon to counter Peking's repeated charges of Soviet-US collusion on alleged "peace talks" over Vietnam.

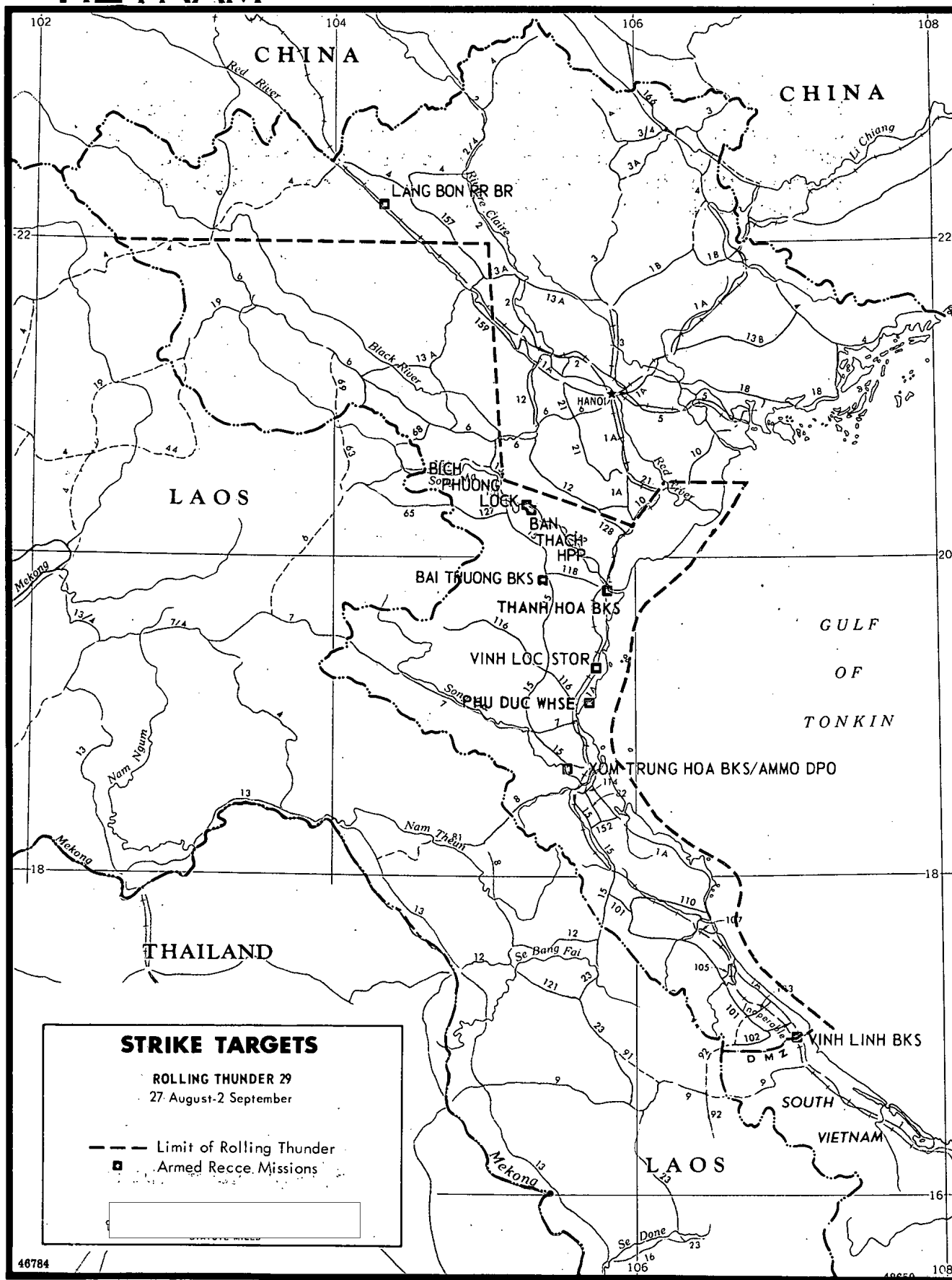
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NORTH VIETNAM

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. US and South Vietnamese aircraft conducted strikes in North Vietnam against the nine primary targets described below during the period 27 August through 2 September (ROLLING THUNDER package 29). Within the first three days all targets had been destroyed and the remaining efforts were spent on armed reconnaissance.

2. The Ban Thach hydroelectric power plant and the associated Bich Phuong dam comprised 0.5 percent of the DRV national capacity for hydroelectric power. The dam also served to regulate navigable waters in the area. The destruction of the Lang Bon railroad bridge on the vital Hanoi - Lao Cai rail line severed the rail link with southwestern China, and interrupted the flow of minerals from North Vietnamese mines to shipping points on the coast.

3. The Vinh Loc storage area, which was composed of 26 warehouses and support buildings, had a 5,000-metric-ton storage capacity comprising 0.5 percent of the national capacity. The Phu Duc warehouse complex was composed of five warehouses and a handling wharf for junks. With a capacity of 30,000 square feet this storage facility represented 0.3 percent of the national capacity.

4. The Thanh Hoa barracks, which provided housing for 1,500-2,000 troops of the 330th Infantry Brigade and other security units, was comprised of 30 barracks and support buildings comprising 0.3 percent of the national capacity. The Vinh Linh barracks, which housed 1,000 troops responsible for the defense of the DMZ, was composed of eight barracks and other support buildings. It represented 0.2 percent of the national capacity.

5. The Bai Thuong barracks was composed of eight target areas. It was the base and training area for two infantry battalions and one engineer battalion. A 6,000-foot runway was under construction

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[REDACTED]

near the barracks. The Xom Trung Hoa barracks and ammo depot was composed of 60 barracks and six revetted ammo bunkers with a 3,700-metric-ton capacity, representing 3 percent of the national capacity.

6. Six US aircraft were lost to ground fire between 27 August and 2 September. Two pilots were killed, three are believed to have been captured, and one was rescued. A total of 94 US aircraft and seven VNAF aircraft have been lost over North Vietnam to date.

7. The number of Soviet personnel in North Vietnam under the auspices of the Soviet State Committee on Foreign Economic Relations (GKES) rose sharply in August. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] about 220 Soviets were there on 1 September, 80 more than on 1 August. GKES is responsible for the administration of foreign economic assistance projects.

8. It is believed most likely that the recent arrivals are concerned with Soviet efforts to fulfill promises of stepped-up economic aid. [REDACTED]

9. A subsection of GKES, the Engineering Directorate, handles military aid matters; however, its role in North Vietnam probably is limited to the negotiation of contracts and delivery arrangements. The increased amounts of Soviet military equipment and military personnel in North Vietnam presumably are controlled directly by Soviet military authorities and would not require any major augmentation of aid officials there.

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